

An Epistle To Mr Pope

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Pernicious dwarf! The malice of thy tongue
Would in another era see thee hung,
The ill-rhymed couplets of thy poison pen
Reveal thee the most miserable of men.
Is it not true that more than once did Swift
Beg thee spread 'tropicality' with thrift?
But to his sound advice you heeded not:
Would that you had, and you were soon forgot'!

'Tis said that men of genius disgust
At any criticism, wrong or just;
You seethed at Bentley's comment on your *Homer*,
That calling it so would be a misnomer,
But of which of these does this offer proof:
A Newton's head, or one crushed under hoof?
In high dudgeon though art more dully clad
Than any thou wouldst guy in *Dunciad*.

Returning to thy caustic (so-called) wit,
Forget not how disparagingly writ
You of the honest, if indifferent Cibber,
Reducing the poor fellow to a gibber,
And ridiculed the scribblers of Grub Street,
Hacks they may be, but they must write to eat,
Unlike you, who, if seldom in good health
Has all the priv'leges that come with wealth.

And thy pretence to be humanitarian
Is exactly that: valetudinarian,
Witness how thee admiring Lady Mary
On her return treated her so contrary,
Thy references to her since have been
Disgraceful, venomous, and quite obscene!
Didst thou imagine in thy wildest fancy
That she could care for such as thee? O mercy!

Then there is too, the question of thy courage,
Brave was the man who mocked and sent up Horace,
But *Namby-Pamby* had thy measure, louse,
For thou stayed shy of Button's coffee-house
After thy satire was published by Steel,

Afeared of Philips' wrath, and stick, to feel.
'Twould have been best for thee that, stoop to mock,
Ye did so veiled, or by the rapes of locks.

Thy epics bore, thy words drone on and on,
Thy didactical pomp: ye gods be done!
Essay On Criticism, I suppose
Is clever, but 'twould better read in prose,
Essay On Man: on that I won't comment,
Unlike thee, I tire of this argument.
Thy epigrams are best: concise and keen,
Alas, they're also few and far between.

O come, come, Mr Pope, do not grow vexed,
Instead, think of whom you may libel next,
It might be me you callously malign,
Forgive me then if I forget to sign
This little *billet doux*, and please don't shake
with anger – those who give must learn to take!
And give you have, and do, would that the fire
Consumed forever your so-called satire.